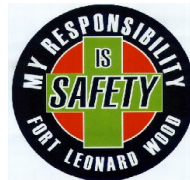




Safety Alert 05-13

Heat Injury Lessons Learned



27 July 2005

On 26 July 2005, the installation suffered its seventh possible heat stroke this summer. It occurred during a training exercise. The Soldier was transported to the emergency room after feeling lightheaded and became unresponsive. Upon arrival, her body core temperature was measured at 107 degrees and she had difficulty breathing. The Soldier was transferred to Columbia Hospital on life support due to the breathing difficulty, and medication was administered. Any type of heat injury should be taken very seriously, especially heat strokes. The following are "best practices" learned from the recent heat injuries:

Commanders, Leaders and Soldiers must balance Warrior Ethos and training requirements with the health and safety of the Soldiers.

Soldiers:

- Realize that good Soldiers do not try to "tough it out" through possible heat injuries. Good Soldiers realize that they are more valuable to their unit when healthy and that reporting heat injury symptoms is not a sign of weakness and is not "quitting" or being "defeated." If they start feeling bad, they should tell their Drill Sergeants.
- Realize that Soldiers should not allow loyalty to their Battle Buddy to prevent them from doing their duty of reporting possible signs that their Battle Buddy is developing a heat injury.
- Always follow the rules for heat injury prevention, including drinking the amount of water they are told to drink. Even when the Soldier does not feel thirsty, it is important to drink the directed amount of water.

Leaders:

- Bring Soldiers in for cold showers, after each major event during the training day. This allows the body to cool down, helping prevent build-up on heat stress.
 - Ensure that Drill Sergeants actively check Soldiers for signs of heat injuries, during rest halts. Consider making these checks more than just verbal. Hands-on checks, to confirm perspiration and body temperatures are better.
 - Consider adding ear thermometers to CLS bags. These thermometers do not break easily, as the regular thermometers do.
 - Rehearse evacuation drills with cadre.
 - Ensure that Ice Sheets are available at all training sites.
 - Promptly use Ice Sheets for suspected heat injuries. Quick action to cool the Soldier's body may make the difference between a minor injury and a life-threatening condition.
 - Do not hesitate to immediately evacuate to the ER any Soldier who shows signs of a heat injury.
- "When in doubt, evacuate."**
- Realize that the initial signs of a lesser heat injury (heat cramps, heat exhaustion, etc.) may cloud assessment if a worsening condition. Do not underestimate the possibility of a worsening condition.
 - When outside the cantonment area, use the LMR radio to notify Range Control for evacuation. Use the red button priority option. Range Control can send medics to the site and can guide the ambulance directly to the site.
 - Be alert for Soldiers who are so well motivated that they may put themselves at risk of heat injuries by being reluctant to report heat injury symptoms.

Commanders:

- Reverse cycle training as the standard day.
- Cancel training (both optional and required events) when necessary to protect Soldiers from heat.
- Ensure that additional nutritional items are available on site during high heat periods, to supplement diets.

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